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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC) to provide data on the relationship of cumulative grade point average (GPA) and College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) performance. Because Florida community college students must be eligible for graduation in order to take the CLAST, the study focused mainly on MDCC students with GPA's of 2.0 or higher. Study results included the following: (1) students with cumulative GPA's of 3.0 or better had passing rates of 90% or higher on each area of the CLAST except the essay; (2) as cumulative GPA decreased, so did passing rates and the proportion of students passing all four parts of the CLAST; (3) for students with GPA's of 3.5 or better, the only section of the CLAST that kept 10% from an Associate in Arts degree was the essay; (4) students with GPA's lower than 3.0 had less than a 70% chance of passing all four test sections; and (5) for students taking the CLAST in fall 1984, correlations between GPA and CLAST scores ranged from a collegewide high of .48 for GPA and computation to a low of .34 for GPA and the essay. Based on study findings, it was concluded that cumulative GPA can predict CLAST performance although attainment of a GPA of 2.0 or better was not a sufficient indicator of basic skills competence as measured by CLAST. (LAL)

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Research Report No. 85-09

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Miami-Dade Community College

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Cumulative Grade Point Average and CLAST Performance
for Fall 1984 Test Takers

Before the College-Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) was implemented, students who completed their curriculum at M-DCC with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or better received a diploma and could proceed to the next level of their education. It was assumed that students who met these criteria were competent in basic skills, having demonstrated such by classroom performance. The CLAST changed all of this. Indeed, the test's proponents either explicitly or implicitly stated that grades alone were not a sufficient indication of competence in basic skills.

The purpose of this study was to provide some data on the relationship of cumulative grade point average and CLAST performance. Because of the criteria which students were supposed to meet in order to write CLAST (i.e., be eligible for graduation that term), the study included mainly students with grade point averages of 2.0 or better. For the Fall 1984 first-time examinees, this meant that 40.3% College-wide had grade point averages of 3.0 or better, while 56.9% had grade point averages between 2.0 and 2.99. Less than 3% had grade point averages of less that 2.0, and most of these students were from South Campus. For the three major campuses involved in CLAST, North and Wolfson had about 45% of their examinees with grade point averages of 3.0 or greater, while South had 36% of its group with grade point averages in that range. These findings are similar to those obtained one year ago, with the exception of Wolfson Campus which showed fewer students with high GPAs (see Research Report 84-03).

As shown by Table 1, students with cumulative grade point averages of 3.0 or better had passing rates of 90% or higher on each area of the CLAST except the essay. As cumulative GPA decreased so did passing rates. This relationship was especially noticeable for the two writing sections of the exam; passing rates declined least in the area of computation.

Because students with higher grade point averages performed better on each area of CLAST, more of this group also passed all four parts of CLAST (see Table 2). For the group of students with grade point averages of

3.5 or better, the only section of CLAST that kept the 10% from an A.A. degree was the essay. As grade point averages decreased, so did the proportion passing all four parts of CLAST. South Campus students with the same range of grade point averages had higher passing rates than North or Wolfson. North Campus students with grades point averages of less than 2.5 had less than a 50% chance of passing all four sections and obtaining an A.A. degree that term.

The relationship of scores on each section of the CLAST or number passed and grade point average can also be summarized by a correlation coefficient. For the Fall 1984 group, correlations ranged from a College-wide high of .48 for grade point average and computation to a low of .34 for grade point average and the essay. The reading and writing correlations fell midway between these two at .39 and .43 respectively. The number of CLAST tests passed (0 thru 4) was least related to grade point average, perhaps in part due to the restricted range of values for the number of tests passed. The correlations are shown in Table 3, along with the correlation of each CLAST measure with every other. You will note that CLAST tests relate more strongly to each other than they do to grade point average. There are several possible reasons for this finding. One possibility is that the range of values for grade point average was restricted due to the requirements for taking the test. We, therefore, would expect the correlations to increase when students with low GPAs were also included in the calculations. Another possibility is that the four subtests included in CLAST measure a set of common competencies which differ from those summarized by cumulative GPA. Correlations for each campus generally reflected the College-wide patterns.

It must be concluded that cumulative grade point average can predict CLAST performance. Students with high grade point averages performed better on the CLAST than students with lower GPAs. However, results also showed that attainment of a 2.0 or better grade point average was not a sufficient indicator of basic skills competence, at least as measured by CLAST. In fact, students with GPAs lower than 3.0 had less than a 70% chance of passing all four parts.

Previous research reports have shown that another predictor of CLAST performance is the level of basic skills upon entry to Miami-Dade (e.g., Research Reports 85-03, 84-22, 84-14, 84-04). Since GPA is also an indicator, perhaps use of both basic skills scores and cumulative grade point average would provide a fairly accurate indicator of how students might do on the CLAST prior to taking it. If they were predicted to do poorly in one or more areas, students could do further work in areas of weakness. Another future study would be the value of grade point average compared to incoming basic skills scores in predicting CLAST performance. Perhaps cumulative grade point average is a better predictor for students who needed developmental work upon entering, while basic skills scores might predict better for students who entered already high in basic skills. A study is underway to answer some of these questions, and results should be available shortly.

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Table 1

Percentages of All First Time Examinees
Passing the CLAST by Subtest by GPA
College-Wide and Campus Comparisons
Fall 1984 Administration

Campus	Number	Percent Passing the CLAST by Subtest			
		Reading	Writing	Computation	Essay
		GPA 3.5 - 4.0			
North	49	98.0	100.0	100.0	87.8
South	65	100.0	100.0	100.0	92.3
Wolfson	19	100.0	100.0	100.0	89.5
Medical	3	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
College-Wide	136	99.3	100.0	100.0	90.4
		GPA 3.0 - 3.49			
North	113	95.1	93.2	99.0	83.5
South	138	99.3	97.8	100.0	91.3
Wolfson	39	92.3	97.4	100.0	84.6
Medical	4	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
College-Wide	284	96.8	96.1	99.6	87.7
		GPA 2.5 - 2.99			
North	103	86.4	88.3	96.1	70.9
South	190	97.4	98.9	100.0	84.2
Wolfson	41	90.2	97.6	97.6	65.9
Medical	9	88.9	88.9	88.9	88.9
College-Wide	343	93.0	95.3	98.3	78.1
		GPA 2.0 - 2.49			
North	73	74.0	75.3	97.3	60.3
South	150	88.0	91.3	96.7	72.0
Wolfson	26	88.5	92.3	96.2	65.4
Medical	2	100.0	100.0	100.0	50.0
College-Wide	251	84.1	86.9	96.8	67.7
		GPA 1.99 and Below			
North	8	75.0	50.0	62.5	50.0
South	20	80.0	95.0	95.0	60.0
Wolfson	2	50.0	50.0	50.0	-
Medical	-	-	-	-	-
College-Wide	30	76.7	80.0	83.3	53.3

Table 2

Percentages of First Time Examinees
Zero, One, Two, Three, or More Subtests of the CLAST
College-Wide and Campus Comparisons by GPA
Fall 1984 Administration

		Percent Passing				
Campus	Number	0 Subtests	1 Subtest	2 Subtests	3 Subtests	4 Subtests
			GPA 3.5 - 4.0			
North	49	-	-	2.0	10.2	87.8
South	65	-	-	-	7.7	92.3
Wolfson	19	-	-	-	10.5	89.5
Medical	3	-	-	-	-	100.0
College-Wide	136	-	-	0.7	8.8	90.4
			GPA 3.0 - 3.49			
North	103	-	1.0	7.8	10.7	80.6
South	138	-	-	2.2	7.2	90.6
Wolfson	39	-	-	5.1	15.4	79.5
Medical	4	-	-	-	-	100.0
College-Wide	284	-	0.4	4.6	9.5	85.6
			GPA 2.5 - 2.99			
North	103	-	4.9	12.6	18.4	64.1
South	190	-	-	2.1	15.3	82.6
Wolfson	41	-	2.4	4.9	31.7	61.0
Medical	9	-	11.1	-	11.1	77.8
College-Wide	343	-	2.0	5.5	18.1	74.3
			GPA 2.0 - 2.49			
North	73	-	9.6	17.8	28.8	43.8
South	150	0.7	2.7	10.7	20.0	66.0
Wolfson	26	3.8	3.8	-	30.8	61.5
Medical	2	-	-	-	50.0	50.0
College-Wide	251	0.8	4.8	11.6	23.9	59.0
			GPA 1.99 and Below			
North	8	25.0	12.5	12.5	-	50.0
South	20	0	10.0	5.0	30.0	55.0
Wolfson	2	50.0	-	-	50.0	-
Medical	-	-	-	-	-	-
College-Wide	30	10.0	10.0	6.7	23.3	50.0

Table 3

Correlations of Grade Point Average and CLAST Performance for Fall 1984 First Time Test Takers

	GPA	Reading	Writing	Computation	Essay	Number Passed
College-Wide data are displayed above the diagonal While North Campus Data are Below						
GPA	-	.39	.43	.48	.34	.29
Reading	.39	-	.56	.51	.50	.57
Writing	.45	.62	-	.48	.52	.53
Computation	.51	.53	.55	-	.35	.41
Essay	.32	.58	.52	.40	-	.67
Not Passed	.34	.63	.59	.45	.71	-
South Campus data are displayed above the diagonal While Wolfson Campus Data are Below						
GPA	-	.43	.42	.55	.37	.29
Reading	.38	-	.52	.47	.47	.53
Writing	.49	.47	-	.42	.52	.46
Computation	.42	.49	.46	-	.30	.35
Essay	.33	.32	.44	.32	-	.66
Not Passed	.33	.48	.53	.41	.68	-

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